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Instructional design certificate programs

Tons of educational organizations and platforms have started offering instructional design certificate programs in the last few years. Why?Instructional designer is one of the trendiest positions in today's job market. It's rewarding, prestigious, and seems to be offering an ideal ratio of routine vs. creative tasks, along with a healthy work-life balance. With a steady shift to remote education and remote work, instructional designers are in high demand, and this trend will continue.However, if you're chasing a career in instructional design, it might be hard to figure out what instructional design skills you actually need to learn in order to land such a job. Moreover, for people who are not yet initiated into the mysteries of eLearning, it's difficult to even guess what sort of tasks an instructional designer carries out on a day-to-day basis.In short, an instructional designer is someone who is competent in both teaching and creating digital training content. The former requires an understanding of the human psychology responsible for the learning process, while the authoring part might come in very different forms, e.g., knowing how to create a training video, a presentation, a mobile app, or anything that can be used as training material, for that matter.Although there's no consensus on whether becoming an instructional designer requires formal training, it goes without saying that a prestigious certificate in instructional design or even a bachelor's or master's degree in the field will drastically improve your chances of getting such a position. Thus, in this article, we'll present you with a list of the best instructional design certificate programs - from free to master's degree.How We Selected the Best Paid and Free Instructional Design Certificate Programs and CoursesIn selecting trainings, we carefully considered several key criteria:Duration. We considered both short-term and long-term options to suit different preferences and time commitments.Transfer credit policy. We examined whether the programs accepted credits from previous coursework or experience.Tuition fees. We compared the costs across different programs, ensuring that they were reasonable and aligned with the value provided.Curriculum. We carefully examined what is included in each program and course. Also, we looked for a diverse range of topics, ensuring that the programs provided comprehensive coverage of instructional design principles and practices.Admission requirements. We reviewed the prerequisites and requirements for each program, evaluating the level of difficulty and compatibility with varying educational backgrounds.Accreditation of the programs. We ensured that the programs meet certain standards of quality and credibility, which is essential for learners looking for reputable certifications.By considering these criteria, we were able to identify trainings that best align with the needs of prospective learners.Comparison of the Best Instructional Design Certificate Programs and CoursesHere's a comparison chart of all of the instructional design certificate programs and online courses addressed in this article. Check out their details. Comparison chart of the best ID certificate programs and coursesNameVendorDurationCostBest for1. How to Create an Interactive Online CourseiSpring Academy3 hours\$270 (Standard), \$570 (Pro)Aspiring course developers who would like to receive hands-on experience in course creation and secure a job in instructional design right after training.2. Instructional Design AcademyIDOL Courses8 weeks\$3,497Course developers who are ready to invest their time in mastering tons of software solutions for building online courses and visuals.3. Professional Certificate in Instructional DesignDigital Learning Institute8 weeks\$2,499People who are new to digital learning or need baseline knowledge of the fundamentals.4. Instructional Design Certificate - 4 coursesUniversity of Wisconsin-Stout9 months\$5,712This course is ideal for those who already have a bachelor's degree in a specialized field from an accredited institution and are interested in pursuing an academic education in instructional design.5. Learning Design and Technology Graduate CertificateHarvard Extension School1.5 years\$13,360Individuals who'd like to get comprehensive knowledge of instructional design and go even further by studying programming and website development.6. MicroMasters Program in Instructional Design and TechnologyUniversity of Maryland8 months\$1,196Instructional designers seeking a comprehensive academic background in their field.7. Certificate in Instructional Systems TechnologyIndiana University Bloomington15 hours\$539.60 for Indiana residents and \$639.43 for non-residentsThose who'd like to advance a career or prepare for a master's or doctoral program in instructional systems technology.8. Online Teaching Knowledge and SkillsOhio UniversityNot specified\$536 for Ohio residents and \$535 for non-residentsThose who want to transition into the field of instructional technology.9. Bachelor of Arts in Instructional DesignThe University of Arizona Global Campus2 yearsNot specifiedThose who would like to earn a bachelor's degree in instructional design.10. Online Master's Degree in eLearning and Instructional Design Northeastern University 2 years \$39,800 Those who would like to receive a master's degree in instructional design and build a solid portfolio during the training. 11. Masters of Education in Learning, Design and Technology, Instructional Design and Development University of Georgia 2 years \$23,220 Those who are looking to gain extensive knowledge in instructional design and aspire to pursue a master's degree in this field. 12. Learning to Teach Online Coursera 17 hours Free Individuals who would like to get a basic understanding of instructional design and start developing eLearning courses. 13. Learning design basics: pedagogy into practice OpenLearning 17 hours Free Individuals who would like to learn the fundamentals of instructional design and create their first eLearning courses. 14. GamificationCoursera 17 hours Free Those who would like to develop creative, human-centered, and thoughtful gamification solutions. 15. Instructional Design for eLearning Udemy 17 hours \$99.99 Instructional designers at any level and of any professional experience. 16. Instructional Design Essentials: Models of ID LinkedIn Learning 45 minutes \$39.99 (for a LinkedIn Premium subscription) Those who'd like to learn the fundamentals of basic instructional design frameworks 17. Advancing Your Skills As an L&D Professional LinkedIn Learning ~5 hours \$39.99 (for a LinkedIn Premium subscription) Instructional designers who are fairly comfortable creating simple online training and want to improve their theoretical knowledge of instructional design principles 18. Instructional Design Pro: Parts 1, 2, and 3 Udemy ~21 hours \$79.99 Individuals who'd like to learn how to write a training curriculum that's easier to learn and more enjoyable to teach.The Best Non-Academic Online Instructional Design Certificate ProgramsWe'll start with serious programs that take over 1 month to complete but are not provided by an academic institution. Finishing these programs will earn you an official instructional design certificate, which will make you a much more valuable hire in the eyes of potential employers and greatly increase your chances of landing your dream job.1. How to Create an Interactive Online Course (iSpring Academy)Vendor: iSpring Academy Level: Any Cost: \$270 (Standard), \$570 (Pro) Duration: 3 hours Certificate: Issued upon successful completionInstructional Design Course by iSpring AcademyThis online instructional design certificate program is provided by a world-renowned eLearning software company, iSpring, that has established itself as a reliable eLearning expert in the market. If you need to learn the practical side of instructional design, this is definitely what you're looking for. The program includes 20 video lessons that will help you master every stage of course development - from identifying learning objectives and creating a storyboard to perfecting the graphics and publishing your project online.It starts out with fundamental theories, such as instructional design models and adult learning theory, and then provides a deep dive into eLearning content creation. After the course, you'll have all the knowledge and skills needed to design effective interactive online courses and assessments.The course comes in two plans: Standard and Pro. The Standard plan provides you with theory that you can take at a comfortable pace. And the Pro plan additionally allows you to put theory into practice and get hands-on experience by completing practical assignments after every training module. Pro learners complete these tasks with iSpring Suite (they get a 3-month free trial), then receive expert feedback, and polish their work if necessary. By the end of the program, all Pro learners have a ready-made interactive course created under the guidance of a Senior Instructional Designer."This is a very dynamic and informative course. What's even more important is that you can't take it just to receive the certificate of completion - you'll have to study really hard to get a passing grade. The result is totally worth it. I use knowledge from the course every day." (Mackenzie B.)What you will learnFundamental principles for creating effective coursesInstructional design methodologyHow to create a design documentStoryboarding and scripting coursesHow to build pro-looking courses without a graphic designerHow to design application-based assessmentsThe building of interactive role-play simulationsHow to record engaging video lessonsOnline course testingHow to evaluate the effectiveness of eLearning coursesBest for: Aspiring course developers who would like to receive hands-on experience in course creation and secure a job in instructional design right after completing the training.2. Instructional Design Academy (IDOL Courses)Vendor: IDOL Academy Level: Any Cost: \$3,497 Duration: 8 weeks Certificate: Issued upon successful completionInstructional Design Academy by IDOL CoursesThe sole entry in the nonacademic subcategory, this is an online training program on instructional design that works as cohort-based learning, with supervision and assistance from the creator of this curriculum, Dr. Robin Sargent. The course promises to provide learners with an adequate amount of theory, stressing the practical application of the acquired knowledge. For example, it should teach you how to record and animate quality training videos.During the training, you'll get hands-on experience with a range of authoring tools and other software to bring design concepts to life. They include:Articulate Storyline ~ For designing interactive eLearning experienceVyond ~ For creating 2D animated videosGenially ~ For creating interactive images, infographics, eLearning, and job aidsCanva ~ For designing professional-looking graphics, GIFs, slides, and videosCamtasia ~ For recording and editing high-quality videosThe program appears to have a strong social learning element with former graduates and fellow matter experts all taking part in reviewing finished projects, providing feedback on them, and answering questions from students."I really enjoyed the IDOL Academy. I have been an Instructional Designer & eLearning Developer for 7 years, but I found the IDOL Academy to be endlessly helpful even this far into my career." (Sherisse G.)What you will learnPlanning, scheduling, budgeting, reporting, and managing risksHow to use different instructional design methodologiesMapping a course plan to learning needs and meeting company goalsRunning productive SME interviews and getting quality learning contentHow to write scripts that are structured and meaningful for learnersDrafting detailed design blueprints and instructional design documentsHow to craft a storyboard and prepare for eLearning developmentManaging the rollout of new training solutions in a corporate settingHow to read reports and analytics to identify learning gapsBest for: Course developers who are ready to invest their time to master tons of software solutions for building courses and visuals.3. Professional Certificate in Instructional Design (Digital Learning Institute)Vendor: Digital Learning Institute Level: Any Cost: \$2,499 Duration: 8 weeks Certificate: Issued upon successful completionInstructional Design Certificate Program by Digital Learning InstituteThis is a globally recognized, industry-approved instructional design certificate program delivered by the Digital Learning Institute (DLI) and credit-rated by Glasgow Caledonian University. The course promises to provide learners with all the knowledge they need to become professional instructional designers. It covers the fundamentals of digital learning design, core design principles, the systematic instructional design process of creating eLearning content, and hands-on experience using a renowned authoring tool, Articulate Storyline.During the training, learners work on an actual project, which allows them to apply their knowledge in practice. Learners are also offered monthly live virtual classrooms, during which they can interact with peers and the course tutors. They also have an opportunity to connect with one of their educational professionals post-program to discuss their career and further education needs."Even though you may have that knowledge, you might not have the qualification behind you, so I was experiencing the imposter syndrome. DLI definitely helped me progress in my journey within digital learning." (Alan O'Flaherty)What you will learnHow to design, build, and roll out high-quality eLearningCore online learning design principles and the underpinning theory, with practiceHow to work seamlessly with SMEs to map out your online learning experiencesTo design a storyboard for an interactive engaging eLearning courseHow to build an eLearning prototype using authoring tools like Articulate StorylineBest for: People who are new to digital learning or need baseline knowledge of the fundamentals.The Best Academic Instructional Design Certificate ProgramsThese are academic programs that take less than two years to complete and can't offer as much depth as a bachelor's or a master's, yet are still highly valuable for employers. It needs to be mentioned here that academic institutions don't really bother putting reviews of their alumni on display.4. Instructional Design Certificate - 4 courses (University of Wisconsin-Stout)Vendor: University of Wisconsin-Stout Level: Any Cost: \$5,712 Duration: 9 months Certificate: Issued upon successful completionInstructional Design Certificate Program by the University of Wisconsin-StoutA highly praised and extremely popular instructional design certificate program that consists of 4 courses, each encompassing a broad topic:Course 1: Trends and Issues in Instructional DesignCourse 2: Instructional Strategies and Assessment MethodsCourse 3: Designing Computer-Based Training (CBT)Course 4: Project Management for Instructional DevelopmentAll the courses must be taken in sequence ~ you need to finish one course in order to take the next one. Each course provides three semester hours of graduate credit. To enroll into the program, you should have a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution.These courses are not informal introductory lectures like the ones that can be found on Coursera or Skillshare. Taking an academic certificate program like this one is a legitimate way to become a high-value asset on the instructional design job market, beating applicants who can't boast such accomplishments to the punch. After finishing the program, each student receives a signed professional certificate with the University of Wisconsin-Stout official seal titled "Graduate Certificate In Instructional Design."You will learnDesigning effective instruction for any delivery methodHow to align instructional activities and assessmentsThe application of computer-based training and matching technology tools to instructional problemsHow to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional designManagement of the systematic instructional design processHow to tap into career and volunteering instructional design network opportunitiesBest for: This course is ideal for those who already have a bachelor's degree in a specialized field from an accredited institution and are interested in getting an academic education in instructional design.5. Learning Design and Technology Graduate Certificate (Harvard Extension School)Vendor: Harvard Extension School Level: Any Cost: \$13,360 Duration: 1.5 years Certificate: Issued upon successful completionThe Learning Design and Technology Graduate Certificate Program by Harvard Extension SchoolLike the previous program, this one also consists of 4 extensive curriculums that last well over 12 months. Upon successful completion, which requires you to get at least a "B" in each of the required courses, you will receive a professional graduate certificate in "learning design and educational technology."The material included in this program teaches a broad range of topics, e.g., "project planning," "creating and editing interactive training content," and even "website development." During this program, you will gain all the skills needed to develop a career in K-12 education, higher education, corporate training, nonprofit education, museums, or related organizations.What you will learnInstructional design theories, frameworks, and their application in developing digital learning experiences, covering project planning, content expertise, communication, writing, and technology skillsRelevant technology, programs, and methods such as interactive media, video production, editing, digital design, and digital storytellingFocused topic areas including website development, web programming, and learning systems for site developmentBest for: Individuals who would like to gain a comprehensive understanding of instructional design and go even further by studying programming and website development. 6. MicroMasters Program in Instructional Design and Technology (University of Maryland)Vendor: University of Maryland Level: Any Cost: \$1,196 Duration: 8 months Certificate: Issued upon completionThe MicroMasters Program in Instructional Design and Technology by the University of MarylandAnother instructional design program from an online branch of a traditional university, this time labeled as MicroMasters, which is supposed to reflect the comprehensiveness and quality of the material. It promises to teach you the theory and practice of ID, plus additional competencies like data analytics. With an emphasis on preparing students for the challenges of the mobile-oriented online learning world, this program should be worth your while.This is a four-course certificate program:Instructional Design and Technology: Learning TheoriesInstructional Design ModelsInstructional Design: Digital Media, New Tools, and TechnologyInstructional Design Course Evaluation and Capstone ProjectThe program content and course projects are sequential. In order to pass each of the four required courses in the MicroMasters program, you must earn a grade of 80% or higher.After you successfully complete this four-course certificate program, you will receive a MicroMasters program certificate. Learners who earn this instructional design certificate may apply for admission to a master's program, and if accepted, the MicroMasters program certificate will count toward the degree.What you will learnContemporary and fundamental learning theories for developing online learning experiencesRelevant technologies that support online learningThe implementation process for online learning experiencesData mining techniques for the design and evaluation of online learning experiencesThe creation of digital media to support online learningBest for: Instructional designers seeking a comprehensive academic background in their field.7. Certificate in Instructional Systems Technology (Indiana University Bloomington)Vendor: Indiana University Bloomington Level: Any Cost: \$539.60 for Indiana residents and \$639.43 for non-residents Duration: 15 hours Certificate: Issued upon completionInstructional Systems Technology Certificate Program by Indiana University BloomingtonThis instructional design and technology certificate program provides the fundamentals of analyzing, designing, developing, and evaluating educational tools. It introduces you to concepts in instructional technology and design. With a professional certificate in instructional design, you can enhance your professional prospects or prepare for a master's or doctoral program in learning systems technology.To enroll in the program, you need to have a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution and minimum undergraduate GPA of 2.75. What you will learnEvaluation and analysis of instructional materialsEffective writing for instructional designThe application of computer-based training and matching technology tools to instructional problemsHow to evaluate the effectiveness of instructional designManagement of the systematic instructional design processHow to tap into career and volunteering instructional design network opportunitiesBest for: Those who would like to advance their career or prepare for a master's or doctoral program in instructional systems technology.8. Online Teaching Knowledge and Skills (Ohio University)Vendor: Ohio University Level: Any Cost: \$536 for Ohio residents and \$535 for non-residents Duration: Not specified Certificate: Issued upon completionInstructional Design Certificate by OHIO UniversityThis program is designed to help students build instructional technology skills. It is suitable for individuals from diverse backgrounds who want to specialize in designing instruction for their particular field of expertise, as well as those interested in focusing on online learning in general.Participants who successfully complete the program will receive 9 semester hours of graduate credit. These credits can be used to make progress toward a Master of Education in Computer Education and Technology degree. Alternatively, up to 8 hours can count toward the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Instructional Technology at Ohio University.What you will learnTeaching and learning onlinePrinciples of instructional designThe fundamentals of computer educationBest for: Those who want to transition to the field of instructional technology.The Best Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Instructional Design The longest, most expensive, and demanding types of programs are a bachelor's degree and a master's degree. However, they are usually the ones that give the highest return on your investments and provide you with advanced degrees needed in the field.9. Bachelor of Arts in Instructional Design (University of Arizona / Ashford)Vendor: University of Arizona / Ashford Level: Any Cost: Not specified Duration: 2 years Certificate: Issued upon completionBachelor's Program in Instructional Design by the University of ArizonaA bachelor's program in instructional design from a credible online university is a great starting point for a distinguished career. It will teach you how to apply core learning principles, create digital training content for businesses and other educational settings, use methodologies to successfully manage course development processes in a team, and overcome issues that exist in today's online educational process.In order to obtain your bachelor of arts in instructional design, you will need to successfully complete 120 credits. Out of these credits, 30 must be at the upper-division level, with 18 of those credits coming from the major program. Additionally, you must complete a minimum of 30 credits at the University of Arizona Global Campus to fulfill the residency requirement.What you will learnHow to design instructional and training interventions and assessments for online, place-based, and blended deliveryApplication of the results of online learning and other analyses to the design of training and instructionHow to apply evaluations of technologies for developing, delivering, and assessing training interventionsDistinguishing how different principles and learning theories influence design processes and outcomesManagement of collaborative processes and participants involved in an instructional design projectHow to respond appropriately to ethical, legal, and political factors that influence ID projects for diverse learners and contextsBest for: Those who'd like to earn a bachelor's degree in instructional design.10. Online Master's Degree in eLearning & Instructional Design (Northeastern University)Vendor: Northeastern University Level: Any Cost: \$39,800 Duration: 2 years Certificate: Issued upon completionMaster's Program in Instructional Design by the Northeastern UniversityAccording to the program overview, an online master's from Northeastern University would be a strong next step for someone who already works in a higher education, corporate, or non-profit setting. The authors put an emphasis on the importance of practice and creating instructional design projects for your ePortfolio during the entire length of the program. They highlight that enrolling in this master's degree program should make you a qualified professional in "next-generation and mobile learning." It is also the most expensive one on this list.During this course, you will have an opportunity to: Create online learning environments that support learners in meeting academic, personal, professional, and/or organizational goals Implement innovative ideas using various technologies and modes of design and deliveryBuild a comprehensive online portfolio showcasing your design skillsWhat you will learnApplication of learning design models, theories, practices, and technologies to develop engaging environmentsHow to demonstrate constructive working relationships and collaborations in a range of professional contextsHow to redesign online learning experiences to create dynamic educational technology-enhanced and engaging environmentsThe ability to effectively present ideas in multiple mediums and to diverse audiencesHow to create learning designs that promote social justice, inclusion, and the building of intercultural and global networksTo respond innovatively to learning design opportunities and challenges in diverse contexts of different industry sectorsBest for: Those who would like to receive a master's degree in instructional design and build a solid portfolio during the training.11. Master of Education in Learning, Design & Technology, Instructional Design & Development (University of Georgia)Vendor: University of Georgia Level: Any Cost: \$23,220 Duration: 2 years Certificate: Issued upon completionMaster's Program in Instructional Design by the University of GeorgiaWith 6 semesters of material, this online program is the longest one on our list. The website states that, after completing it, the student will be prepared not just to apply some learning theory to creating Computer-Based Training (CBT), but will have enough hands-on experience to tackle any real-life instructional design challenge. Additional topics include video production, project management, and analytics in instructional design, as well as learning the ropes of team-based project design.In this online master's program, you will also gain the knowledge and skills needed to utilize various media creation tools and technologies. With these tools, you will create eLearning modules, video presentations, and other forms of educational content. Additionally, you will study how design approaches like games, simulations, and educational multimedia can enhance the learning experience.What you will learnIntroductory instructional system designDesign thinking and development toolsHow to design interactive learning environmentsEvaluation and analytics in instructional designEmerging perspectives on learning, teaching, and educational technologyVideo production for teaching and learningOnline teaching and learningAdvanced instructional designTeam-based design of interactive environmentsPrinciples of human performance technology and analysisResearch methods in instructional technologyProject management in instructional designBest for: Those who are looking to gain extensive knowledge in instructional design and pursue a master's degree in this field.The Best Free Online Instructional Design CoursesThis subset includes relatively short (